



Racial Divide in South Africa

For Prelims: Racial Discrimination, Apartheid, South Africa, Unemployment

For Mains: Apartheid System of South Africa, Movement against Apartheid, Contribution of India in Abolition of Apartheid, Role of Mahatma Gandhi.

[Source: TH](#)

Why in News?

Despite the end of **apartheid** 30 years ago in South Africa, its economy remains deeply divided by race and systemic inequalities persist.

- This has reignited political debate on the effectiveness of the post-apartheid **Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) policy**.

What is the Current State of Racial Divide in South Africa?

- **Unemployment Rates:** As of April-June 2024, South Africa's **overall unemployment rate was 33.5%**. Among **Black South Africans, it was significantly higher at 37.6%**, compared to **7.9% for white South Africans** and 23.3% for those of mixed race.
 - Unemployment among Black individuals has consistently **exceeded the national average** and **risen by over 9%** since 2014.
- **Management Control:** In 2022, **white individuals, who make up about 8% of South Africa's population, held 65.9% of top management positions**, while Black individuals held only 13.8%, as per the report of South Africa's Commission for Employment Equity.
- **Job Level Distribution: Blacks make up 82.8% of unskilled labour** positions, while white individuals hold just 0.9%, with Black representation decreasing at higher job levels.
- **Ownership in Companies:** According to the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Commission, **no Johannesburg Stock Exchange-listed company is 100% Black-owned**.

What was Anti-Apartheid Movement in South Africa?

- **Apartheid:** Apartheid (or apartness) was a system of **racial segregation and discrimination** in South Africa that lasted from **1948 to 1994**.
 - It was implemented by white Europeans colonists' governments in **South Africa**.
- **Key Policies of Apartheid System:**
 - **Segregation:** Non-whites were forced to **live in designated areas** and use separate public facilities from whites.
 - **Voting rights:** Non-whites were denied the right to vote.
 - **Marriage and social relations:** Interracial marriages and social relations were prohibited.
 - **Associations and protests:** Blacks were barred from forming associations or protesting against apartheid.

- **Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM):** The Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM) was the first successful transnational social movement of the 20th century.
 - **Objective:**
 - To **internally dismantle the apartheid regime** in South Africa and
 - To externally push for political, economic, and cultural sanctions against the government.
 - **Phases of the AAM:**
 - **First Phase (Pre-1960s):** It focused on **nonviolent direct action** led by organisations like the **African National Congress (ANC)** and the **South African Communist Party (SACP)**.
 - **Second Phase (Post-1960s):** The struggle became **international, gaining support** from the African Union, the **United Nations (UN)**, and countries like India.
 - The UN adopted the **International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid**.
 - **Third Phase (Post-1980s):** It was marked by massive internal resistance through **strikes, boycotts, demonstrations**, and acts of sabotage to make the country ungovernable.
 - **Impact of the AAM:** By 1990, the South African government lifted bans on political parties and **repealed key apartheid laws**, including the **Land Acts of 1913 and 1936**, the **Population Registration Act**, and the **Separate Amenities Act**.
 - **Nelson Mandela**, the leader of the **African National Congress (ANC)**, was released from prison in 1991, and in 1994, he became the **President of South Africa**.
 - **End of Legalised Segregation:** The apartheid laws were repealed, leading to the establishment of a democratic government in 1994.
 - **Universal Suffrage:** All South Africans gained the right to vote, regardless of race.
 - **Constitutional Protections:** The new constitution enshrined human rights and equality for all citizens.
 - The **South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission** was established in 1995 to **address the atrocities committed** during the apartheid era and facilitate national healing and reconciliation.

What was the Role of India in Ending Apartheid in South Africa?

- **Gandhi's Influence:** The seeds of Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM) in South Africa were **sown by Mahatma Gandhi**, who was inspired by the humiliation faced by Asians from White Europeans.
 - He established the **first anti-colonial and anti-racial discrimination movement**, founding the **Natal Indian Congress in 1894** and the **newspaper Indian Opinion in 1903**.
 - In 1906, Gandhi led thousands of **Satyagrahis in boycotting Asiatic Law Amendment Ordinance** that mandated Indians to carry registration certificates with their fingerprints.
 - When he left South Africa in 1915, he left behind the legacy of the **Phoenix Settlement**, an ashram-like community near Durban.
- **Indian Diaspora's Role:**
 - During **World War II**, the bond between the national movements of India and South Africa strengthened.
 - Indian South Africans increasingly recognized their shared destiny with the African majority, **participating in joint struggles against racism**.
- **Role of Indian Government:**
 - Upon assuming office, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru emphasised India's **commitment to ending colonialism** and promoting racial equality globally.
 - India was the **first country to sever trade relations with the apartheid government in 1946** and later imposed a complete embargo on South Africa.
 - It was also the first to bring the **issue of South African apartheid** to the **United Nations (UN) in 1946**, helping to internationalise the fight against racism.
 - Additionally, the **African National Congress (ANC)** maintained a representative office in New Delhi from the 1960s, and India actively supported the **AFRICA Fund to sustain the**

Anti-Apartheid Movement.

- Apartheid was on the agenda of the **Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)**, right from the first conference in 1961.
 - India has played a **significant role in NAM** since its inception.
 - During the **2nd NAM conference at Cairo, Egypt** in 1964 the government of **South Africa was warned** against the discriminatory practices of apartheid.

What is Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) Policy of South Africa?

▪ **About:**

- The Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) policy is a governmental initiative in South Africa designed to **enhance the economic status of Black, Coloured, and Indian South Africans**.
 - It aims to rectify historical imbalances by promoting equitable distribution of economic resources among the majority of South African citizens.
- The **Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act** was made into law in 2003.

▪ **Objectives:**

- Increasing the **ownership, management, and control of enterprises by Black individuals**.
- Facilitating ownership and management opportunities for communities, workers, and cooperatives.
- Achieving **fair representation of diverse racial groups** in the workforce.
- Encouraging preferential **procurement from Black-owned businesses**.
- Investing in enterprises owned by Black individuals.



UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

**Q. With reference to the British colonial rule in India, consider the following statements:
(2019)**

1. Mahatma Gandhi was instrumental in the abolition of the system of 'indentured labour'.
2. In Lord Chelmsford's 'War Conference', Mahatma Gandhi did not support the resolution on recruiting Indians for World War.
3. Consequent upon the breaking of Salt Law by Indian people, the Indian National Congress was declared illegal by the colonial rulers.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 1 and 3 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (b)

Mains

Q. Bring out the constructive programmes of Mahatma Gandhi during Non-Cooperation Movement and Civil Disobedience Movement. **(2021)**

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